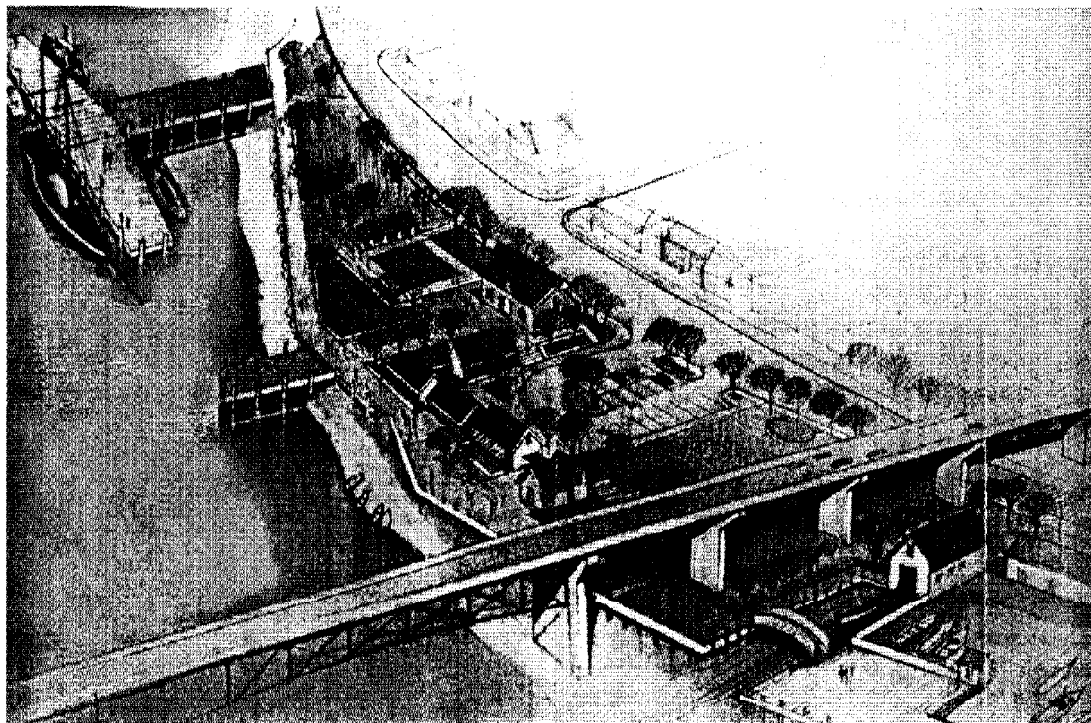


**Virginia Transportation Enhancement Program**

# **Yorktown Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area**

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**Yorktown, Virginia**



**Submitted by:  
York County Board of Supervisors  
January, 2000**

**Project Summary**

The proposed Yorktown Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area improvements are designed to enhance Yorktown's accommodations for modern-day waterborne transportation (cruise boats, etc.) as well as providing a place for docking "tall-ships" and other vessels representative of the 300-year history of the Port of Yorktown. In addition, the project includes the restoration and adaptation of the 60-plus year old Wharf warehouse/ferry terminal building into a facility housing displays and information related to the history of the waterfront and the various types of sailing ships, steamers, ferries and other vessels that have frequented the Port of Yorktown over the course of its rich history. Also included in the plan is the construction of a public convenience facility that will provide restrooms for the general public as well as showers and lockers that could be used by sailing ship crew members or bicyclists. The project will connect with and complement the Riverwalk system which is under construction and is also funded through the Transportation Enhancement Program.

## **Project Background**

Since 1988, the York County Board of Supervisors has been working to enhance visitor impressions and experiences in Yorktown. These concerted efforts began in response to a number of identified community concerns including a deteriorating commercial area, an eroding beachfront, a dwindling resident population, and an uncertainty about the future of several major landholdings in the village. With these problems, the tourism potential of the village was not being realized, public and private infrastructure was deteriorating, and public and private investments were being withheld.

The Yorktown Steering Committee was formed in 1988 to discuss these issues and coordinate a vision for the future of the village and a plan for the achievement of that vision. The committee was composed of two members of the Board of Supervisors, two members of the Yorktown Trustees, the Superintendent of the Colonial National Historical Park, the Director of the state-operated Yorktown Victory Center, a representative of the Watermen's Museum, and a representative of the village citizens' group. The Yorktown Foundation, an organization created specifically to assist in funding the Yorktown improvements, now has a representative on the Committee also. The Steering Committee decided early on that the vision development process should include a great deal of public participation. To ensure that, it sponsored a weekend workshop in April 1989, which was attended by approximately 70 interested citizens and facilitated by the internationally-known Waterfront Center.

Many excellent ideas for the enhancement of Yorktown, and particularly the waterfront, were generated during the *Focus on Yorktown* workshop and there was a great deal of agreement and consensus among the participants. These visions were later blended together to serve as the foundation for the more detailed master plan effort that would follow and also as the basis for development of the goal statement that has guided the Yorktown revitalization effort:

*Create in Yorktown a vibrant community of people living, working, learning, visiting, and playing; while enhancing its national stature, and respecting and preserving its continuing history, environment and character.*

The development of consensus on the conceptual plan and vision statement immediately improved the sense of community and the atmosphere for both public and private investment. Nevertheless, it was recognized that a more detailed plan,

including specific recommendations, cost estimates, and phasing proposals, would be necessary to realize the improvements identified in concept. With funding provided through the County's Capital Improvements Program, the internationally-known consulting firm Sasaki Associates, Inc. was selected to prepare the detailed plan.

The revitalization process gained focus and direction during the intensive two-year planning process that culminated in the adoption of the Yorktown Master Plan on March 4, 1993, as an element of the York County Comprehensive Plan. The Master Plan fulfills the following objectives:

- Provides for public improvement projects in Yorktown that are consistent with the direction provided by the *Focus on Yorktown* concept plan, responsive to the historic context of the Town, sensitive to the concerns of Yorktown residents, adaptable to modern functional requirements, and economically feasible from an engineering perspective.
- Provides opportunities and encouragement for a range of land uses on privately-owned land that complements the Town's historic character and is feasible from a market perspective.
- Serves as the basis on which to develop a set of design guidelines for Yorktown's streets, architecture, and landscape.

Since adoption of the Master Plan a number of improvements have been made by the County and others are underway. These include enhancements to various public properties in the village as well as a major shoreline stabilization effort along Water Street undertaken in partnership with the Virginia Department of Transportation. One of the major image-transforming projects proposed in the Master Plan - the Riverwalk - has been funded through a Transportation Enhancement Program award (\$528,000 Enhancements) and is scheduled for completion in May 2000. *[The other major image-transforming project - the Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area - is the subject of this application.]* The Riverwalk project's local match, which was originally projected to be \$132,000, has now grown to \$1,246,800 as a result of the commitment of additional County funds intended to provide for a higher quality of construction (e.g. - granite rather concrete curbs, cobblestone driveway aprons) more in keeping with the historic character of the village.

Given the length of time since the original *Focus on Yorktown* workshop and the significance of the Wharf-area improvements, the County hosted the *Focus on*

*Yorktown II - the Wharf* in July 1998 to provide some of the original participants, as well as others, an opportunity to discuss the improvement concepts contained in the Master Plan. This workshop, with its approximately 70 participants, resulted in some minor adjustments to the Wharf-area concept, but essentially, it re-affirmed the consensus that the area should be improved in a way that respects and interprets its history, that complements the Riverwalk, and that increases opportunities for visitors to experience and enjoy the Yorktown waterfront. Working with this consensus, the County's design consultant presented a refined Wharf-area improvement concept to the Board of Supervisors in October 1998 and the Board authorized detailed design and engineering work to proceed. That design work is now underway, fully funded by the County.

In 1999, the County submitted an application for \$1.5 million in Transportation Enhancement Program funding. The County subsequently received approval of a \$550,000 award and is developing a plan to use that award and approximately \$450,000 of local funding to implement Phase I of the project – the relocation and partial renovation of the ferry terminal building. This year's application is to request the balance of the \$1.5 million (i.e. – \$950,000) to allow additional phases of the Wharf-Area improvements to be completed.

## **Yorktown Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area**

### **Project Location and Description**

The proposed Yorktown Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area improvements are designed to enhance Yorktown's accommodations for modern-day waterborne transportation (cruise boats, etc.) as well as providing a place for docking "tall-ships" and other vessels representative of the 300-year history of the Port of York (Yorktown). In addition, the project includes the restoration and adaptation of the 60-plus year old Wharf warehouse/ferry terminal building into a facility housing displays and information related to the history of the waterfront and the various types of sailing ships, steamers, ferries and other vessels that have frequented the Port of Yorktown over the course of its rich history. A conceptual plan depicting the proposed improvement is attached. Specific elements of the project will include:

Relocated Warehouse/Ferry Terminal Building - A key component of this proposed plan is the relocation of the former freight warehouse/ferry terminal building (currently used as a Post Office) from its current position on the Yorktown Wharf to a position closer to Water Street. The current use of the building by the postal service is being discontinued and the building will be vacated by early 2000. Once relocated, the building will be renovated to create an open-air public space housing historic exhibits, artifacts and interpretive material related to the Yorktown waterfront, and particularly its waterborne transportation and commerce. In preparation for its relocation and renovation, the National Park Service has prepared a report on the Character Defining Features of the building (report prepared by William D. Brookover, Historical Architect, Philadelphia Support Office). The design and implementation of the relocation and renovation effort will respect the conclusions of this report. Steps preparatory to relocating the building off the Wharf and onto a new foundation are underway and the 1999 Enhancements award will be used to implement this first phase of the total project.

Reconstructed/Expanded Wharf - Once the post office building is relocated, the existing Wharf will be demolished. Current plans are for part of the concrete rubble to be used to supplement rip rap that will be installed as part of the next phase of shoreline stabilization. The shoreline stabilization element of this project is actually the third phase of a multi-year effort to stabilize and nourish the beach along the York River. An observation deck

is proposed in the location of the existing Wharf. A new Wharf/Pier is proposed to be constructed approximately 350 feet down-river. This new concrete pier will extend out into the river approximately 260 feet to provide deeper draft than the existing wharf. This improved docking facility will be designed to accommodate cruise ships (such as the Clipper Cruise Lines vessels that currently call on Yorktown approximately four times a year), dinner cruise boats, and an occasional “tall-ship” exhibit. In addition, the docking facilities will be designed to accommodate a small number of pleasure craft with the idea that Yorktown would be a popular destination for “day-sailors” on the Chesapeake Bay. No marina facilities (i.e. - fueling, servicing, permanent mooring) will be included. A \$182,000 contract for the detailed engineering design work for the new pier and observation deck has been approved and funded by the Board of Supervisors. Total estimated construction cost for the pier and the observation deck is \$2,000,000.

Public Convenience Facilities - The concept plans include the construction of public restroom facilities as well as a shower facility intended for crew members of “tall-ships” and charter sailing vessels. Research indicates that these facilities are much-desired by the crews of some of the replica exhibit ships and charter sailing vessels that may be attracted to Yorktown’s docking facilities. The building will also include several small temporary lockers that might be used by those crew members or that could be used for temporary secure storage for bicyclists (who might also use the showers) since Yorktown is such a popular destination for local and long-distance bikers (for example, Yorktown is often the destination of bicyclists who start on the west coast and end their trip by “dipping” their bike wheels in the York River).

Public Plaza / Commons - The area surrounding the relocated ferry terminal building and between the new observation deck and the new pier is proposed to serve as an open-air passive recreational facility and will include extensive seating and relaxation areas, a performance area (for small concerts and other cultural events), extensive walkways tying into and complementing the Riverwalk system (also funded through the Transportation Enhancement Program) and linking the area to other attractions, a fountain or water-sculpture, and extensive interpretive plaques. The area will be attractively landscaped and well-lighted.

Parking Lot/Trolley Stop - A small parking lot/service drive is proposed in the area adjacent to and west of the relocated ferry terminal building. In addition, the concept plans calls for the installation of a trolley/bus stop that will provide linkages to numerous other public parking spaces in the village as well as an opportunity for trolley or bus linkages to Williamsburg or other area destinations. This feature will be particularly beneficial at times when cruise boats dock since their passengers very often are interested in taking bus/trolley tours of the Historic Triangle area. Regular trolley service will be provided in Yorktown beginning in April 2000 using the County's recently acquired (through a CMAQ grant) trolley bus.

The Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area will be constructed on property that is owned by the Yorktown Trustees. The Trustees are the guardians of the Yorktown Commons, a public area along the waterfront dating back to the original platting of the village in the 1700s. The Yorktown Trustees have been active participants in the Yorktown improvement effort and have endorsed the Wharf-area design concept. Under the terms of a 1988 cooperative agreement between the Trustees and the Board of Supervisors, the County has assumed planning, maintenance and improvement responsibility for the Trustee's property and the proposed improvements will be undertaken in accordance with this agreement.



## **Project Schedule**

- **Design/Engineering**

The design/engineering phase for this project is underway and is being funded entirely by the County. The work is being performed by Carlton Abbott and Partners, Inc. assisted by various subcontractors (e.g. - pier design specialists, etc.)

- **Construction**

Construction is planned to commence as soon as the detailed engineering plans can be reviewed, approved, permitted, bid and contracted. Work is currently underway to secure the environmental compliance clearances for the entire project. Phase I of the project will include relocation of the ferry terminal building off the Wharf and to a new foundation using the 1999 Enhancements Program award. The Board of Supervisors has established 2006 as the completion goal for all the Yorktown improvements (to coincide with the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the British surrender at Yorktown and in support of the Jamestown 2007 celebration). The Wharf-area project is the major component of that effort and will be given construction priority. Its construction represents a logical follow-on to the Riverwalk project. Assuming a construction start date of 2000 and full funding, the project should be able to be completed by the end of 2003.

- **Special Phasing Considerations**

Construction of these improvements can occur as a single project or can be phased over more than one funding cycle. In recognition of the partial funding received in 1999, the project is being pursued in phases, as noted above. Plans and construction sequencing can be adjusted to accommodate additional Transportation Enhancement Program funding stretched over two program years, if that is necessary. However, full funding of the remainder of the County's \$1.5 million request (i.e. - \$950,000 in 2000) would greatly assist in scheduling the completion of the project.

**Yorktown Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area - Estimated Costs**

Costs are based on preliminary estimates prepared by Carlton Abbott and Partners, the County's design consultant for this project (all design and engineering costs are being funded by the County and are not a part of this project proposal)

• Site Work / Utilities	\$400,000
• Pier / Observation Deck	\$2,000,000
• Relocation / Renovation of Warehouse / Ferry Terminal	\$600,000
• Restrooms / Public Convenience Building	\$275,000
• Curbing / Walkways / Public Plaza	\$575,000
• Signature Feature (monument, statue and/or fountain)	\$250,000
• Parking	\$ 50,000
• Fencing / Benches / Lighting	\$200,000
• Landscaping	\$150,000
• Signs / Plaques / Interpretive Displays	\$ 50,000

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TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS	\$4,550,000
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**Benefits**

The proposed Yorktown Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area improvement project appears eligible for consideration under the following enhancement categories and will provide the following benefits:

- Provision of Facilities for Bicycles and Pedestrians - Category #1

This project will provide an extensive network of walkways, seating areas, scenic overlooks, and waterfront observation points that complement the Riverwalk system already under development along the York River and Water Street. The pedestrian network will also extend onto the new pier(s), thus providing an opportunity for land-based visitors to enjoy the water and water-based visitors to reach the various attractions in Yorktown and elsewhere in the Historic Triangle area. In addition, the pedestrian walkways will provide direct access to the adjacent trolley stop (and tour bus drop-off) being constructed as part of the Riverwalk system.

The public convenience facility/building that is an element of the project will include restroom facilities, showers, and several temporary lockers that could be used by ship's crew or bicyclists. Such facilities will benefit the numerous bicyclists that cycle within or to Yorktown, some of whom make Yorktown their final destination on cross-country bicycle trips.

- Landscaping and Other Scenic Beautification - Category #4

This project will include an extensive landscaping element that will enhance the appearance of the public space located between Water Street and the York River and that will complement the landscaping being installed as part of the Riverwalk project. The landscaping plan will include plantings that are well-suited to the waterfront environment, that can tolerate severe weather conditions, and that will mature in a way that does not block desirable views of the York River. Integrated into the landscape plan will be seating areas, perhaps a fountain or water sculpture, and pedestrian scale lighting fixtures. Implementation of this element of the project will significantly enhance the appearance of the waterfront and will provide a pleasant observation and interpretive area at approximately the mid-point of the Riverwalk system as it traverses the Yorktown waterfront. As such, it will benefit numerous visitors to Yorktown, whether they are users of the

Riverwalk, the transportation museum, the wharf, or simply are driving by the area along Water Street.

- Historic Preservation - Category #5

The village of Yorktown – “Where Independence Was Won” – is perhaps best known as the site of the culminating battle of the Revolutionary War and is listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register as well as the National Register of Historic Landmarks. The village has a rich history, beyond its Revolutionary War significance, dating back to its founding in 1691 and the early 1700s when it was a prosperous tobacco port. In the height of this prosperity, approximately 3,000 people lived in Yorktown and the waterfront was the focal point of much activity. Starting with this period, activity levels and the frequency of waterborne commerce and transportation

has ebbed and flowed much like the tides. Throughout this history, the port has been visited by many different types of vessels, ranging from the small ferry that operated between

Yorktown and Gloucester as early as 1690 to the modern-day

ocean-going passenger cruise lines that anchor in the river and shuttle visitors to shore via launches.

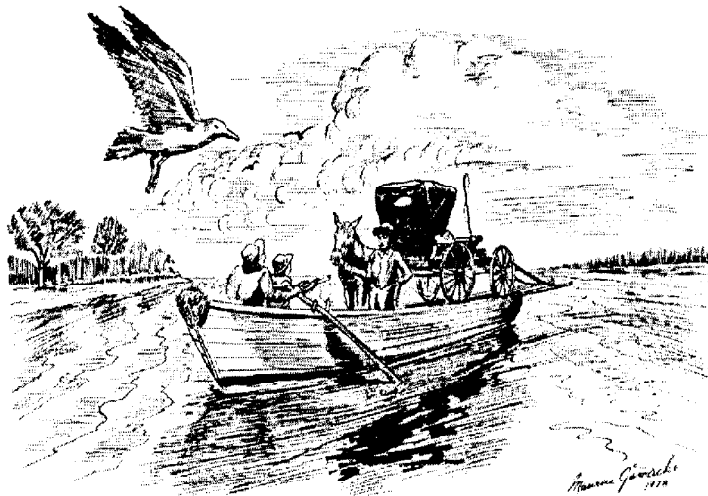
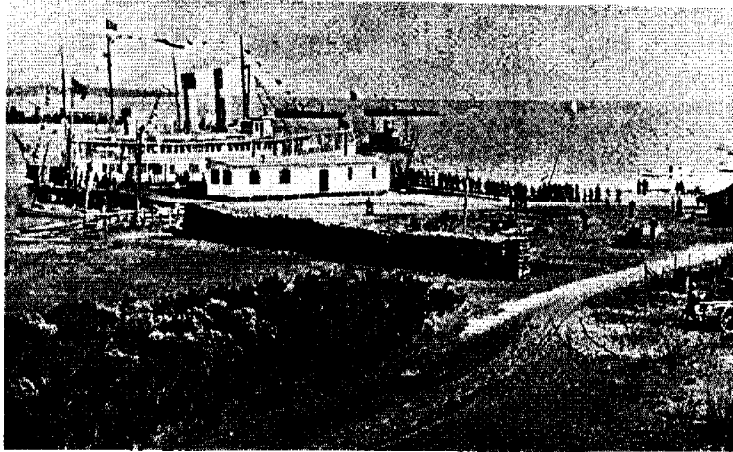


Illustration of old row-ferry that operated between Yorktown and Gloucester. (*Yorktown, As I Remember*, Lucy Hudgins O'Hara, 1981)

While piers and docking facilities have been located along various parts of the shoreline throughout the years, the current focal point of the waterfront is the Wharf that was constructed in 1936. This existing facility is at about the same location as the first public wharf, Buckner's Wharf, constructed in 1715, (See Section 4 - excerpts from "York Under The Hill" Yorktown's Waterfront, a historic resource study by Charles Hatch, Jr, National Park Service, 1973) and others constructed in subsequent years. This project,

together with the Riverwalk system that is already funded and underway, will provide additional opportunities to present and interpret the rich seaport heritage. It will preserve the Wharf site as a public space and will provide enhanced



Excursion boat docked at the Yorktown Wharf in 1909, similar in design and appearance to those that ran between Baltimore and West Point. (Photo from Yorktown, As I Remember, Lucy Hudgins O'Hara, 1981)

amenities and attractions for visitors to Yorktown, whether they come by land or water. The new docking facilities will be capable of accommodating a variety of types and sizes of ships. Most notably, the facilities will provide an opportunity for Yorktown to become a port-of-call for replica ships, such as the Schooner *Virginia*, which has already expressed interest in the prospect of docking in Yorktown, and The Rose, a replica ship that docked in Yorktown last Spring (but with great difficulty at the existing Wharf).



- Rehabilitation and Operation of Historic Transportation Buildings, Structures and Facilities - Category #6

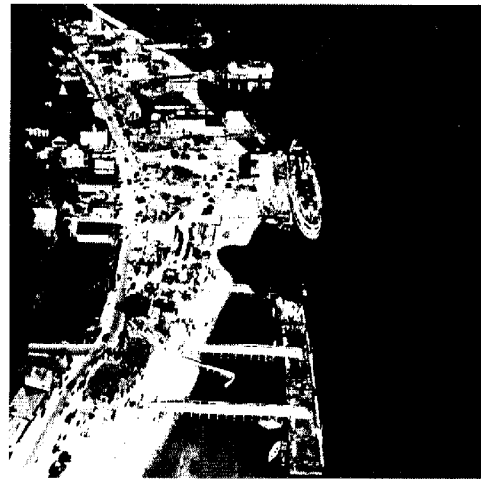
The project involves the rehabilitation of the former freight warehouse/ferry terminal building that sits on the existing Wharf. This building, which is currently owned by the National Park Service and used as a post office, has been determined to be a contributing significant structure in the Yorktown Historic District as listed on the National Register. The building will actually be moved from its current position on the Wharf to a location closer to Water Street and less susceptible to storm and wave hazards. Ownership will transfer from the National Park Service to the Yorktown Trustees in accordance with previous agreements and subsequent maintenance and operation will be by the County pursuant to the Board of Supervisors/Trustees agreement. Rehabilitation will include: placement of the building on a new foundation; restoration of the original fenestration (or at least their shapes) and other exterior features characteristic of its use as a freight warehouse/ferry terminal; complete rehabilitation, repair and restoration of the exterior of the building (brickwork, roof, etc.); and, renovation and adaptation of the interior of the building to accommodate static displays, exhibits, interpretive materials. The interior space is not anticipated to be heated or air conditioned since doing so would be inconsistent with its original use as a warehouse and would be difficult to accomplish while preserving the building's significant features. Instead, the concept calls for at least a central corridor to remain as an open-air passage from the front to back (waterside) of the building, thus "inviting" people to enter the structure and to look toward the observation deck to be constructed in the location of the existing Wharf. The building will be made ADA-compliant and will be surrounded by a brick-surfaced pedestrian plaza connecting to the Riverwalk system and the adjacent new observation deck and the new pier slightly downriver.

The displays and exhibits within the rehabilitated building will be open to the general public without charge. The primary focus of the display, interpretive exhibits, etc. will be on the 300-plus year history (See Section 4 for excerpts from York Under the Hill - Yorktown's Waterfront) of waterborne commerce and transportation in Yorktown and will depict and feature the numerous types of ships that have docked along the waterfront. In addition to permanent displays, the building will be capable of accommodating revolving exhibits/displays that will allow information to be conveyed to visitors about other significant attractions and events in

Yorktown. Also, there will be sufficient space to allow occasional historical or shipping-related demonstrations or exhibits (for example, a presentation on colonial-era navigation techniques by a ship's captain). In combination, the rehabilitated building, its permanent and revolving displays, and the special feature programming, will allow visitors to Yorktown to gain understanding and appreciation of the importance of waterborne transportation not only as it relates to the history of Yorktown, but also to the entire Hampton Roads area and the Chesapeake Bay.

- Establish Transportation Museums - Category #11

The freight warehouse/terminal building will be rehabilitated and adapted to serve as a museum/exhibit area documenting and interpreting the rich history of the Yorktown waterfront and the numerous types of waterborne transportation that have docked at its port facilities since even before the town's establishment in 1691. The facility will include both permanent and revolving exhibit space, as well as space that could accommodate interpretive demonstrations and presentations that could be programmed by the County or by other organizations with which the County may be able to establish arrangements (e.g. - the Watermen's Museum, the Mariner's Museum, the National Park Service, etc.). Development, operation and maintenance of the facility will be by the County and it will be open to the general public without charge. This facility will benefit all visitors to Yorktown by providing them with an opportunity to learn about and appreciate the significance of the waterfront and the various types of ships that have docked at its port facilities over the years.



Yorktown Waterfront - Circa 1931

This project appears eligible for favorable consideration in the context of the following evaluation criteria as listed in the Project Selection section of the Enhancement Program guidelines:

- *Accessibility to the public:* The very essence of the project is to increase public accessibility to the waterfront and to provide additional public attractions and convenience facilities at the approximate mid-point of the Riverwalk system and the waterfront itself. The facilities will be accessible by visitors coming to Yorktown by land or water.
- *Compatibility with adjacent land use:* The project will complement adjacent land uses, which include restaurants, a hotel, and a museum. All of these uses will benefit from additional visitor activity on the waterfront and the aesthetic improvements to the project area will enhance the value and potential of those properties.
- *Connectivity to existing or proposed facilities:* The project will be connected directly to the Riverwalk system, and will actually become a part of it. The project will create a continuous public activity area along a major portion of the Yorktown waterfront. The new wharf will provide opportunities for waterborne transportation connections to the remainder of Hampton Roads, the Chesapeake Bay, and, in fact, the entire world. The multi-modal nature of the project will be further demonstrated through the incorporation of the trolley/bus pull-out area and the bicycle accommodations, both of which help provide linkages to the Williamsburg area and points beyond.
- *Number of federal enhancement categories:* This project supports five (5) of the eleven (11) federal enhancement categories.
- *Inclusion in a state, regional or local plan:* The Wharf and Waterfront Interpretive Area improvements are described in the Yorktown Master Plan which was adopted, subsequent to public hearings by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, on March 4, 1993, as an element of the York County Comprehensive Plan. The Yorktown Master Plan was reaffirmed when the County's Comprehensive Plan was updated and re-adopted on October 6, 1999.
- *Visibility from a public right of way:* The project improvements will be visible from Water Street, the public street that parallels the entire length of the Yorktown waterfront, and also from the Coleman Bridge which carries US Route 17 across the York River. In addition, they will be visible from the York River, which also is a public transportation right of way.



- *Availability of match money:* The non-federal portion of the funding for this project will be provided by the County, either from revenues generated by the transient occupancy tax or from supplementary funding raised by the independent Yorktown Foundation, a non-profit organization formed specifically to support the Yorktown revitalization effort. The amount of non-federal funding pledged to the project is at least \$3,050,000, which at 67% of the estimated project construction budget, is well above the minimum 20% local-match threshold.
- *Provides economic benefits for Virginia travel and tourism:* The project is anticipated to have a positive impact on visitation to Yorktown and the Historic Triangle area by providing opportunities for waterborne travelers to enter the area via the new public wharf/docking facilities. There is already a limited amount of waterborne visitation (Clipper Cruise Lines docks approximately four times per year to disembark passengers, some of whom tour Yorktown while others are bused to Williamsburg). Also, for the past two years, a trans-oceanic cruise line has anchored in the York River and disembarked passengers to tour Yorktown and Williamsburg (and, a date for 2000 is already confirmed). The County has had contacts from other cruise line operators interested in making Yorktown a port of call and it is anticipated that the new wharf/docking facilities and other waterfront improvements will cause this to occur. These vessels bring new visitors to the area to patronize shops, restaurants, and other attractions - all of which will produce benefits in the tourism/travel segment of the economy.
- *Incorporates new or existing education programs:* The project will result in the establishment of new opportunities to educate and inform visitors about the significance of waterborne commerce and transportation in Yorktown's history as well as the types of vessels that have visited Yorktown's port. This will be accomplished through a combination of permanent and revolving exhibits and displays, as well as periodic interpretive demonstrations and presentations. In addition, the expanded docking facilities will be designed to accommodate visiting "tall-ships" or other original or reconstructed period vessels, many of which travel with their own displays, exhibits and/or interpretive staff that would become available to waterfront visitors. Interest has already been expressed by the operators of several of these

vessels, one of which docked (with great difficulty) at the existing Wharf in April 1999.

- *Public/private venture and community support:* The project is one element of the public/private revitalization initiative underway in Yorktown. The project was initially conceptualized in the *Focus on Yorktown* community planning workshop conducted in 1989, was further refined in the *Focus on Yorktown II - the Wharf* workshop conducted in July 1998, and has been incorporated into all discussions and planning efforts, both for public and private ventures, since. The project represents a cooperative effort on the part of the County, the Yorktown Trustees and the National Park Service, and is also supported by private landowners, individuals and organizations.

In summary, the project will clearly enhance the attractiveness of the Yorktown waterfront and will complement and represent a logical extension of the investment being made in the Riverwalk.